

Message Text

SECRET

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44

ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1819

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT NIACT IMMEDIATE

SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

USCINCEUR IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T TEHRAN 2333

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (T E X T)

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, IR, KU, IZ

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE IRANIAN MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOR KUWAIT

REF: A. STATE 66152

B. KUWAIT 1147

C. AMMAN 1927

D. TEHRAN 2293

SUMMARY: IN OUR OPINION, KUWAIT- IRAQ IMBROGLIO WOULD BE WRONG
PLACE,

WRONG TIME AND WRONG CIRCUMSTANCES FOR IRAN TO TAKE ON EXPANDED
SECURITY OBLIGATIONS WITH GULF NEIGHBORS. WE BELIEVE GOI SHARES
THIS VIEW, AND WE THINK IT WOULD BE MISTAKE ON BOTH POLITICAL
AND MILITARY GROUNDS FOR USG TO ENCOURAGE GOK TO SEEK IRANIAN
ASSISTANCE AS SUGGESTED STATE REFTEL. END SUMMARY.*

1. ALTHOUGH GOI WOULD BE EXTREMELY DISPLEASED TO SEE IRAQ ACHIEVE
STRATEGIC GAINS OR POLITICAL CAPITAL FROM MOVES AGAINST KUWAIT,
WE DOUBT SHAH WOULD WISH COMMIT NATIONAL FORCES AND PRESTIGE
TO AID GOK UNTIL ALL OTHER POSSIBILITIES OF ASSISTANCE WERE
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EXHAUSTED, AND POSSIBLY NOT EVEN THEN. IRAN HAS BEEN VERY CAREFUL IN RECENT YEARS WHEN ITS OWN FORTUNES WERE ENGAGED NOT TO PUSH TENSIONS WITH IRAQ BEYOND EASILY MANEAGEABLE LIMITS. PATIENT DIPLOMACY AND SEVERELY RESTRICTED MILITARY ACTION HAVE BEEN IRANIAN RESPONSE TO IRAQI PROVOCATIONS. OUR SOUNDINGS IN RECENT DAYS INDICATE IRAN WISHES KUWAIT WELL, BUT HAS NOT EXTENDED OPEN- ENDED OFFER OF PROTECTION. IRAN' S STRONG PREFERENCE, WE ARE CONFIDENT, WOULD BE FOR ARAB STATES TO COME TO AID OF KUWAIT. IRAN IS SENSITIVE TO POSITION IT OCCUPIES IN ARAB EYES AND WOULD NOT WISH TO RISK JEOPARDIZING ITS CAREFULLY PLANNED EFFORTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH RADICAL AND MODERATE EQATES BY TAKING ON, WITHOUT ARAB ASSOCIATION, AN INTRA- ARAB QUARREL THAT OTHERS MIGHT BETTER HANDLE.

2. ACCORDINGLY, WE ARE DUBIOUS SHAH WAS ACTUALLY AS GENEROUS AS HE APPEARS IN KHAMMASH' S REPORT (AMMAN REFTEL). WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY FURTHER DETAILS EMBASSY AMMAN CAN OBTAIN.

3. WE ALSO DOUBT ON MILITARY GROUNDS THAT GOI WOULD FIND ATTRACTIVE RESERVE AIRCRAFT PROPOSITION DESCRIBED STATE REFTEL. ALTHOUGH IRANIAN RADAR MIGHT PICK UP AN IRAQI STRIKE AT KUWAIT, WE SERIOUSLY DOUBT THAT IRANIAN AIRCRAFT COULD RESPOND IN TIME TO RENDER USEFUL DEFENSE. PROVIDING CONTINUOUS AIR UMBRELLA OVER KUWAIT WOULD NOT BE FEASIBLE EVEN IF IIAF HAD AIR TANKERS. RETALIATION AGAINST IRAQI TARGETS WOULD PROBABLY BE ONLY ALTERNATIVE OPEN TO IIAF. THIS COULD INVITE IRAQI COUNTER ATTACK AGAINST HIGHLY VULNERABLE IRANIAN OIL INSTALLATIONS. IF IIAF PLANES WERE TO BE SECRETLY HELD IN RESERVE, THEY WOULD, OF COURSE, NOT CONSTITUTE EFFECTIVE DETERRENT AGAINST IRAQI ATTACK.

4. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE, AS SUGGESTED TEHRAN REFTEL, THAT WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE SETTLEMENT OF THIS PROBLEM AND PROTECTION FOR KUWAIT FROM ARAB SOURCES. THAT IS AVENUE WHICH SEEMS TO US MOST LIKELY TO CONFINE PROBLEM TO MANAGEABLE PROPORTIONS, TO SATISFY NATURAL PREFERENCES OF KUWAIT AND IRAN, AND IN LONG RUN TO PROMOTE IRANIAN RELATIONS WITH ARAB NEIGHBORS IN GULF.
HELMS

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